NEIGHBOURS WHO'S WHO MAGAZINE No. 1

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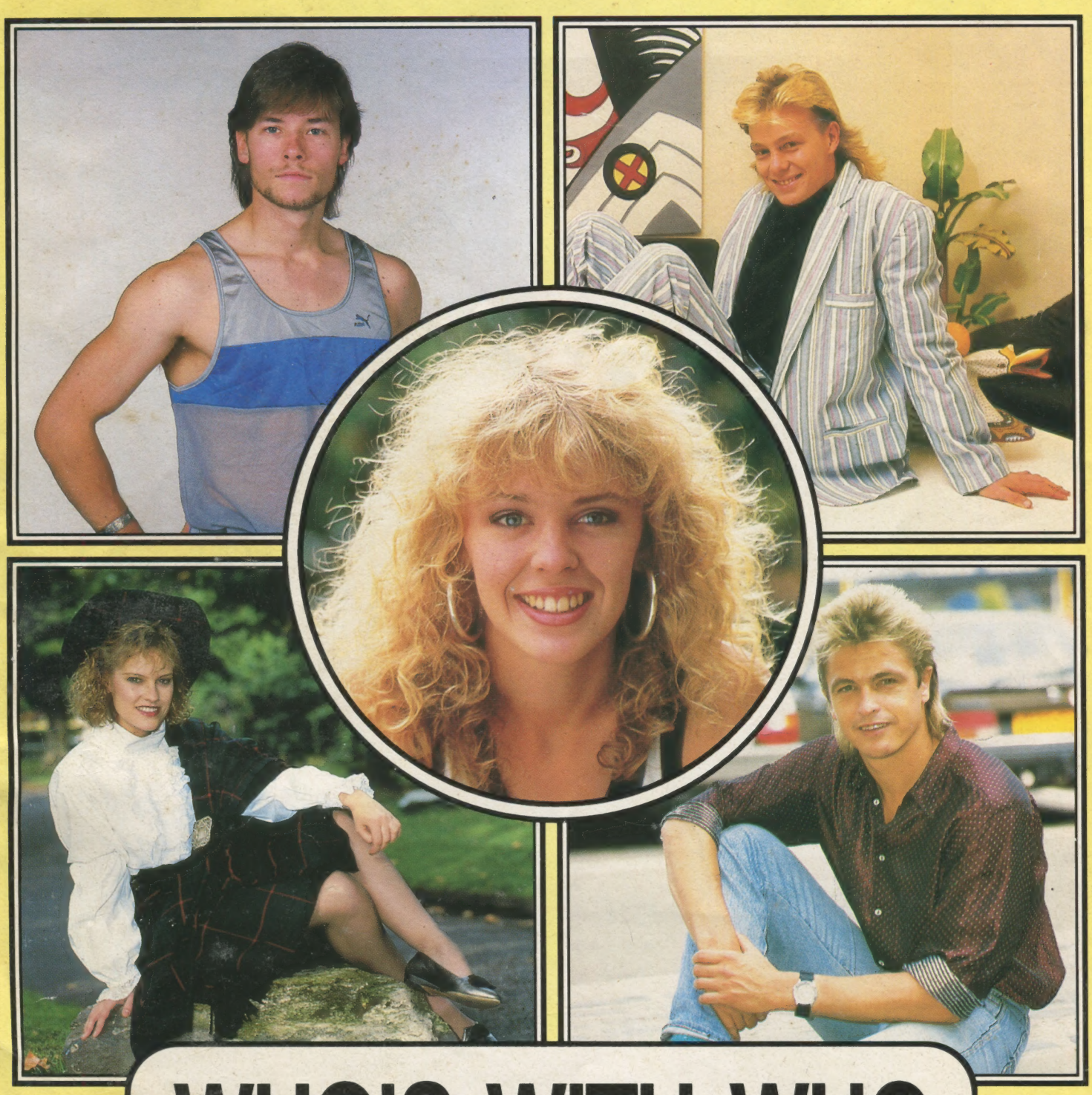
Neighbours

WHO'S WHO



WHO'S WITH WHO

THE MAKING OF NEIGHBOURS

RAMSAY PEOPLE

NEIGHBOURS is different to so many other TV soaps because it shows the life of real people. Competing with high powered 'Dallas', with its glossy tales of rape, seduction, finance and million dollar fast dealings, or the gritty realism of 'EastEnders' contrived shock effects from abortion and gay lovers to mental breakdowns.

Script editor Wayne Doyle said "Australia is a middle class country and all kinds of people here live in a middle class life in attractive middle class homes."

Producer Maria Watson, who produced the hugely popular but appalling 'Prisoner — Cell Block H' said, "I'm after better scripts, acting, direction and more outside footage — you can always improve."

The show is recorded on a near production line basis at Grundy's studio in Nunwawading, Melbourne. The vast Studio B houses the sets of the Ramsay Street home interiors. To film it costs a mere £20,000 per 25 minute episode (even EastEnders costs some £90,000 plus per episode). NEIGHBOURS is very cost conscious, with basic fixed sets, cheap lighting and a minimum of outside recording. Even the scripts cost a mere £800 per episode (well below the U.K. rate). For a 70 hour working week, which is from 6.45am until 7.15pm most of the cast earn £240 a week. Peter O'Brien said "It's amazing what the cast of Dynasty earn for a few episodes, I wouldn't have got that for five years in NEIGHBOURS".

Real outside locations for Ramsay Street are filmed at Pin Oak Court, a select cul-de-sac in an outer Melbourne suburb of Vermount South. Producers drew up a contract three years ago, when they offered to pay, what at the time seemed a reasonable sum for the use of their house and garden. The owners of the four comfortable modern houses, currently valued at £90,000 are paid a total of £200 a week. The real house used for the Ramsay's house is the only one in the street with a swimming pool.

Now actual residents are pestered by sightseers and even vandals. Veronica Benton (whose family live in one of the houses) complained "People drive past and stare at us and our houses all the time".

The small amount of outside filming takes around 24 hours to record each week. Very occasionally scenes are shot on other locations such as the beach at Manly, Sydney.

Today on BBC Television it's currently watched by 15 million people every weekday. Since it was first shown in October 1986 after being bought for a few thousand pounds by the BBC to help fill the gaps in their new daytime service, (because of its outstanding success it was moved to a later time-slot).

Before the first production of NEIGHBOURS there had actually been plans for the series to be a BBC & Grundy co-production. With half the central characters as British descended immigrants going to Australia, but it never happened. (At least half of the real life cast are of British descent).

In the end the BBC ended up buying the series as a daytime filler at bargain basement prices. So far they have 400 episodes with another 200 available.

The original series was screened here leading straight into the second revised series, not interrupted by a three month gap as it was in Australia. Consequently apart from cast changes regular members altered their appearance. For example Shane suddenly went from having short, back and sides to a mane of long streaked hair.

The amazing success of the five-times-a-week soap has amazed even BBC bosses. Head of purchasing Barry Brown recalled how his colleagues took the Mickey when he first bought the show 18 months ago.

GRUNDY

Peter Pine, vice president of Grundy, says that the inclusion of attractive young cast members is a key to making a hit soap. "We noticed that in American series they often picked 28 year olds to play teenagers. We decided to use actors in their teens and early twenties who look good in swimsuits. Australian life is the outdoor life, after all. We swim a lot, so we wanted to exploit this."

Unhindered by the union restrictions that affect programme making in Europe and the US, Grundy, the major producer of Australian-made shows, retains a firm grip on things. Even the mildest criticism by its employees can be taken as outright disloyalty. One actor who left the cast of 'Neighbours' told a reporter that he thought the original series scripts were poor. He promptly received a letter informing him that he would not be working for the company again. When actor Francis Bell, who played outspoken plumber Max Ramsay, spoke out about the terms of his contract, he was replaced. A brother, Tom Ramsay, played by Gary Files, was immediately invented and took over lines originally written for Max.

THE MAN WHO CREATED NEIGHBOURS

Driving force behind NEIGHBOURS is reclusive TV mastermind Queensland born Reg Watson, head of drama at the Grundy Organisation. The man involved in Grundy hits like 'Prisoner Cell Block H', 'Young Doctors' and 'Sons And Daughters' originated NEIGHBOURS. (Grundy — has produced some 80 game shows and 20 drama series. Selling the latter to over 60 countries).

In Britain during the 50's, he was in at the start of popular commercial television. Being involved in numerous entertainment shows including game show 'Hit The Limit' and the first real U.K. soap 'Emergency Ward 10'.

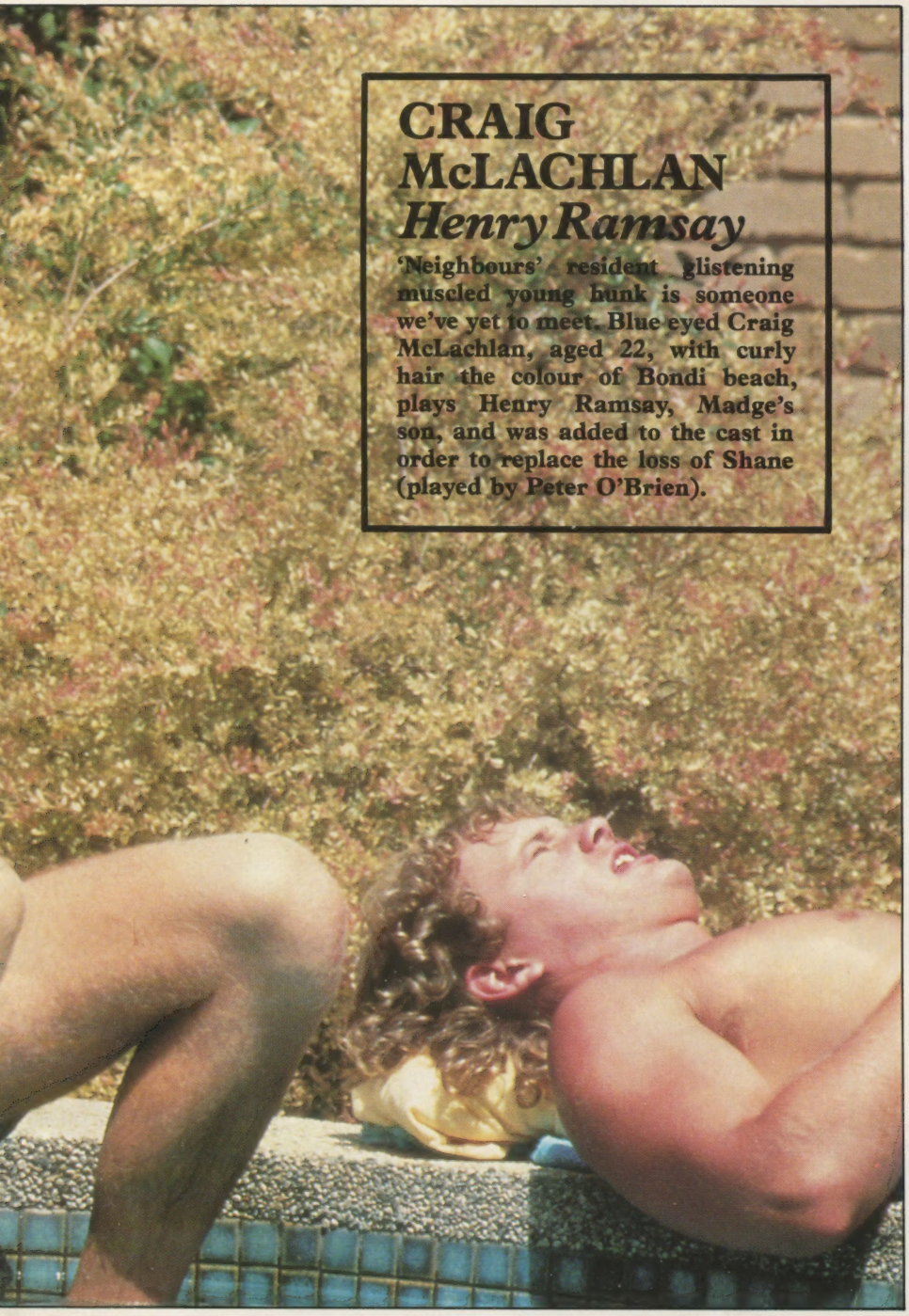
For a decade he was producer of 'Crossroads'. Then in 1973 he returned to Australia to mastermind hit TV series like 'Sons And Daughters'.

Originally titles considered for the saga of 'Ramsay Street' were 'One Way Street' or 'No Through Road'. It finally became what is a story about NEIGHBOURS. Reg Watson based NEIGHBOURS on the type of Brisbane street he grew up in. "Anything that happens in an average street will happen in the serial. The 'heavy' in NEIGHBOURS is life itself. The shows simplicity is where its strength is. Its concept is simple, the story of three families on a street, with a good balance of contrasting personalities. I first got the idea for the series from watching 'Coronation Street' in Britain over 20 years ago. The characters in the series are ordinary people dealing with everyday life. Not living on a constant knife edge. In NEIGHBOURS we show young people and older people who communicate. They may not agree with each other but at least they talk."

THE REAL LIFE SAGA OF RAMSAY STREET

In the beginning NEIGHBOURS was screened in Australia on Channel 7 starting in March '85, at a 6pm time slot. It was then a different type of show with a primarily middle class, middle aged cast of characters. With more emphasis on issues (EastEnder type messages) without the glamour of a younger cast or element of humour.

This version received low viewing figures. After six months and 171



CRAIG McLACHLAN *Henry Ramsay*

'Neighbours' resident glistening muscled young hunk is someone we've yet to meet. Blue eyed Craig McLachlan, aged 22, with curly hair the colour of Bondi beach, plays Henry Ramsay, Madge's son, and was added to the cast in order to replace the loss of Shane (played by Peter O'Brien).

THE MAN WHO CANCELLED NEIGHBOURS

Ron Casey, now an ex-television executive (then general manager for Channel 7) was responsible for axing NEIGHBOURS from Australian TV almost three years ago only to see it now resurrected as a worldwide hit.

Channel 7, one of Australia's four major TV stations, already had two award-winning serials — 'A Country Practice' and 'Sons And Daughters', (screened in the U.K.). Having given NEIGHBOURS **$4 million** and, in Australian terms 'a fair go', Mr Casey pulled it off the air.

It had been a failure in all but the most remote country areas where sheep outnumber people and even life in Melbourne is considered glamorous.

For some six months the exploits of Shane and Daphne gathered dust on Channel 7's shelves. That was until Rupert Murdoch's Channel 10 came along and bought the rights and turned it into a hit.

His excuse now, is that NEIGHBOURS was not cost-effective. However, industry insiders say Mr Casey was eager to spend the savings on another Australian obsession, Australian Rules football.

Mr Casey, a former sports newscaster, now admits with some reluctance that he made a mistake. he said. "It's a nice enough show, I suppose, but for the life of me I can't understand why it's done so well in Britain."

episodes and a cost of $4 million it was cancelled by Channel 7.

Recalled Peter O'Brien "I overheard two executives saying it was to be scrapped. Then the next day I asked the producer and he said it was just a rumour. But I checked with the originator Reg Watson and he confirmed that it was all over. I don't think NEIGHBOURS was well planned. It was thrown together at the last minute and the actors had to make something out of abysmal scripts. Despite that and it's original failure it had something that eventually made it click."

Grundy — an Independent Production outfit — had a bold man in charge, Ian George Holmes, he believed NEIGHBOURS still had potential and actually resold the series to rival Channel 10, (the first time a rejected show was ever sold to another competing commercial station in Australia).

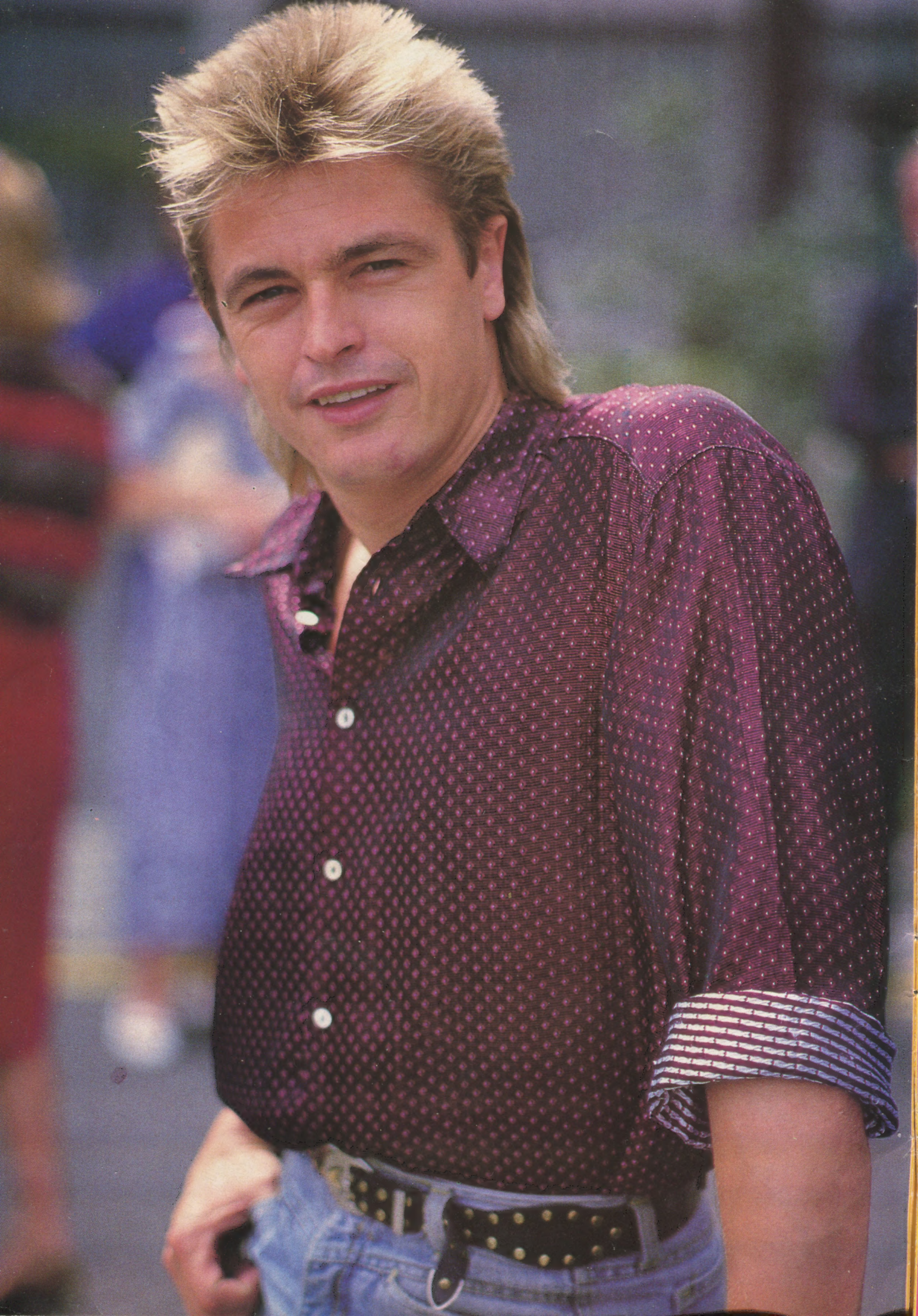
Only 6 of the original cast survived for the new look series. Jim Robinson (Alan Dale), Paul Robinson (Stefan Dennis), Helen Daniels (Anne Haddy), Des Clarke (Paul Keane), Daphne Clarke (Elaine Smith) and Shane Ramsay (Peter O'Brien).

New younger members were added to give it a more youthful look. With a new Scott Robinson played by Jason Donovan taking over the role from Darius Perkins, Charlene played by Kylie Minogue was introduced, also Mike Young (Guy Pearce) and plain Jane Harris (Anne Jones).

On Rupert Murdoch's Channel 10 NEIGHBOURS received a new prime-time slot of 7pm. However, in May '86 the show again faced cancellation. When it failed to gain a big enough audience in all important Sydney. (Australia's most populated city — Melbourne is number two).

It was a major publicity hype, rumoured to have cost the network some half a million, that turned things around. The cast were dragged round every major shopping Mall to convince the people it might be worth a try. This worked and via word of mouth viewing figures started to climb.

NEIGHBOURS has since been sold to France, Italy, South America and New Zealand. Said Grundy chief Ian Holmes "The world is the same all over. People are the same in outlook and similar when it comes to relationships, we all have NEIGHBOURS."



PETER O'BRIEN

PETER O'BRIEN
Shane Ramsey

He grew up the son of a dairy farmer in Murray Bridge, Southern Australia, his father's grandparents were Irish immigrants.

"It was the kind of place where people get married, have kids and stay in the same job for ever. I was always too restless for that."

When Peter was 19 he was rushed into hospital suffering from a rare blood poisoning sickness called Toxoplasmosis. He had to have medication for the following five years. Fortunately he appears to have made a full recovery.

He graduated from Adelaide University with a degree in Physical Education. "I didn't really want to be a P.E. teacher. I had always fancied the idea of becoming an actor and even did a drama course at Adelaide. But I never seriously considered it". However one of his drama teachers was connected to a modelling agency and suggested that the blue eyed, fair haired, good looking actor do some modelling.

Peter has worked as a car-park attendant, swimming pool digger, laboratory assistant and even as a science teacher. "I've been bumming around the world since I was 17. I've always loved travelling. I also like living rough, I once hitched all round the Northern territory and West Australia."

Some six years ago he was working on an oil rig in North Australia, when all the non-residents were evacuated from the path of a cyclone and sent to Perth. There he discovered his parents had been trying to contact him after being told a film company wanted him for a small part. "It's strange really, but if it hadn't been for the cyclone I wouldn't have got in to acting. Then I did commercials, modelling and amateur theatre."

Following periods of hitching around and casual work he auditioned for TV production company Grundy. Some months later he was informed he would be accepted for a part in 'Starting Out'. He had a hectic 2000 mile trip, during a major transport rail and plane strike,

back to Melbourne. The series didn't last long though, it was cancelled after just 17 episodes.

"I learned a lot about the business in that time and discovered that acting was a kind of natural home for me. I found that I could actually do a job that would make me happy."

A few TV parts followed including a part in an episode of action series 'Special Squad'. Then in November '84 he auditioned for the role of Shane Ramsay in NEIGHBOURS.

Peter has no regrets about being in the series or quitting either. "Let's just say the whole experience was starting to feel a bit restricting. I was starting to feel like I was existing a bit in a straitjacket. There's only so much you can do to develop a character. 'Neighbours' was one of the best things that ever happened in my career. But it was time to do something different."

Since quitting NEIGHBOURS some 8 months ago he's been filming a new Australian TV series 'The Flying Doctors'.

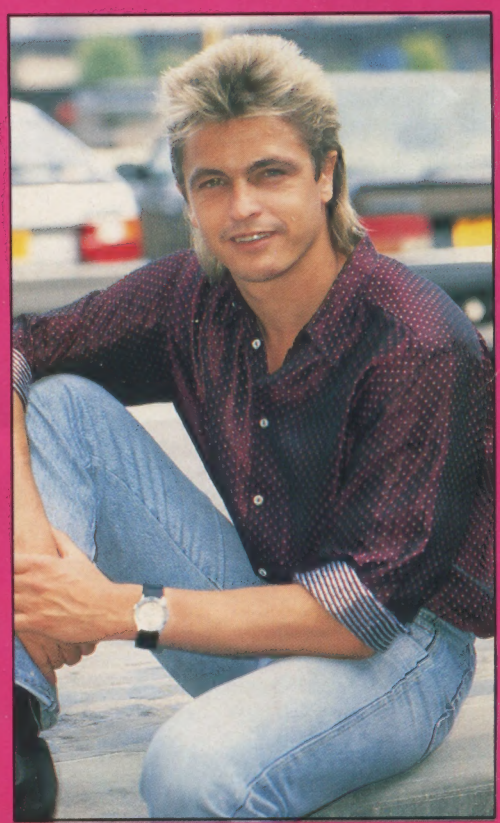
He owns a dilapidated 30's beach front eight bedroom house in St. Kilda a trendy suburb of Melbourne, also a red light district. It was originally a seminary for monks and had fallen into disrepair. "I've never been promiscuous. I don't pick up girls in nightclubs because nice girls don't go to those places. I'm not interested in that side of fame."

Peter's lover, they don't actually live together — is Scottish born actress Elaine Smith, who played Daphne in 'Neighbours'. Said Elaine: "Just as Shane and Daphne were falling apart on screen, Peter and I were falling in love."

Some have claimed that their relationship is one-sided and Peter plays the field, with stories in the press linking him to his co-star in 'The Flying Doctors', beautiful actress Rebecca Gibney. Commented Elaine: "I was hurt to read in the London tabloids that I had supposedly 'won' him back from Rebecca. The story was never true."

Now Peter aims for a screen career like Australian born star Mel Gibson. He said: "I really admire the way he has become an international star."

Peter, who has no excess interest in luxury living, aims to stay close to his roots. "I would hate to think that fame had meant that my next door neighbour couldn't look over the fence and say 'Hey, Pete, fancy a cup of coffee?' I just want to be thought of simply as the boy next door. The kind of guy that you could ask to look after your cats."



KYLIE

Kylie Ann Minogue was born on the 28th May 1968 in Melbourne, Australia. Naturally blond haired Kylie is just 5ft 1inch tall and so slim at just six and a half stone that the wardrobe department buy kids clothes for her.

Kylie, as just about everybody now knows, plays Charlene — Madge's willfull and headstrong daughter.

"I think viewers like Charlene because she is an average teenager growing up and having difficulties with her mother. She is a bit of a rebel and youngsters probably relate to that. There's a bit of myself in Charlene. But I don't fight with my mum like she does. Charlene's background is very disturbed and she doesn't live at home. Whereas my background is normal and quiet. She's a year younger and has to wear horrible clothes because she doesn't have much money. But the main difference is that she's more outgoing and a bit of a tomboy. I'm very reserved. In the series she's a motor mechanic, whereas in real life I don't have the faintest idea about cars." (In real life Kylie owns a Ford.)

Kylie still lives at home with her family and her black dog called 'Gabby'. Her father is an accountant and her Welsh born mother — a former ballerina, is a housewife. She has a brother Brendan aged 17 and a sister Danielle aged 16. Brendan is studying to become a cameraman, while Danielle is following in Kylie's footsteps, having just made her first single at a Sydney recording studio.

Their house has no swimming pool — unusual in the prosperous Melbourne suburbs. Said Kylie "It's an ordinary two storey house in a quiet area. My bedroom's always a real mess — clothes everywhere, but I tidy it whenever I get round to it".

When Kylie was 11, her sister Danielle was invited to a TV audition. Her mother not wanting sibling rivalry insisted Kylie came too. It was she and not Danielle who landed the part in 'The Sullivans', as Carla, a Dutch girl. Then she appeared in two TV series not screened in the UK, 'Skyways' in which Jason Donovan played her brother and 'The Henderson Kids'.

Kylie has mainly had acting jobs, although she once worked in a video rental shop — where she served behind the counter on Sunday's.

"I went into NEIGHBOURS straight after finishing my HSC (Higher School Certificate), so I was quite lucky in that respect. I went into the show straight through an audition."

"I recently bought a house in Melbourne but it's just an investment, I would never have the time to look after it myself. Melbourne's got a great nightlife — good clubs, restaurants. I don't get to see my friends as often as I would like. Sometimes I do wish I just had a 9-to-5 job. Normally I get up at 6am and start work at 7am. I don't finish until around 7pm."

In what little spare time she has, she likes dress-making and home handicrafts. As for outdoor activities, Kylie likes horse riding, ten pin bowling and swimming. Though she said, "I don't do much sport, I've never been sporty".

KYLIE MINOGUE
Charlene Mitchell

Music

Kylie's first single was a cover version of LOCOMOTION (a classic 60's hit by Little Eva) and that was at Number One for seven weeks in Australia. This was followed by a second single GETTING CLOSER. Kylie's third single I SHOULD BE SO LUCKY went to Number One in the UK charts. Recorded in London by the hit factory of Stock, Aitken and Waterman. (Responsible for the hits by Rick Astley and Sam Fox.) "As soon as we met her we just knew she had what it takes, Kylie is pure dynamite" said Matt Aitken.

Said Kylie, "A recording career is something I've always felt confident I could pursue and although it would have been easy to have been satisfied with acting, I've always wanted to expand. You've got to go for it if you want to succeed."

Kylie, or her management, threatened legal action regarding a spoof of her hit record I SHOULD BE SO LUCKY. Released in Australia the record, sung by British born singer-actor Daniel Abineri, is called I CAN SEE YOUR NIPPLES. It's a send-up of Kylie's well publicised holiday with lover Jason on the island of Tahiti where she was photographed, by a pressman using a telephoto lens, frolicking topless on the beach.

This continued intrusion into her private life has put some strain on the actress-singer. Kylie has constantly denied, though not very convincingly, that she is intimately involved with Jason. She claimed "I'm not having an affair with Jason, our trip to Tahiti was simply part of a publicity scam for NEIGHBOURS".

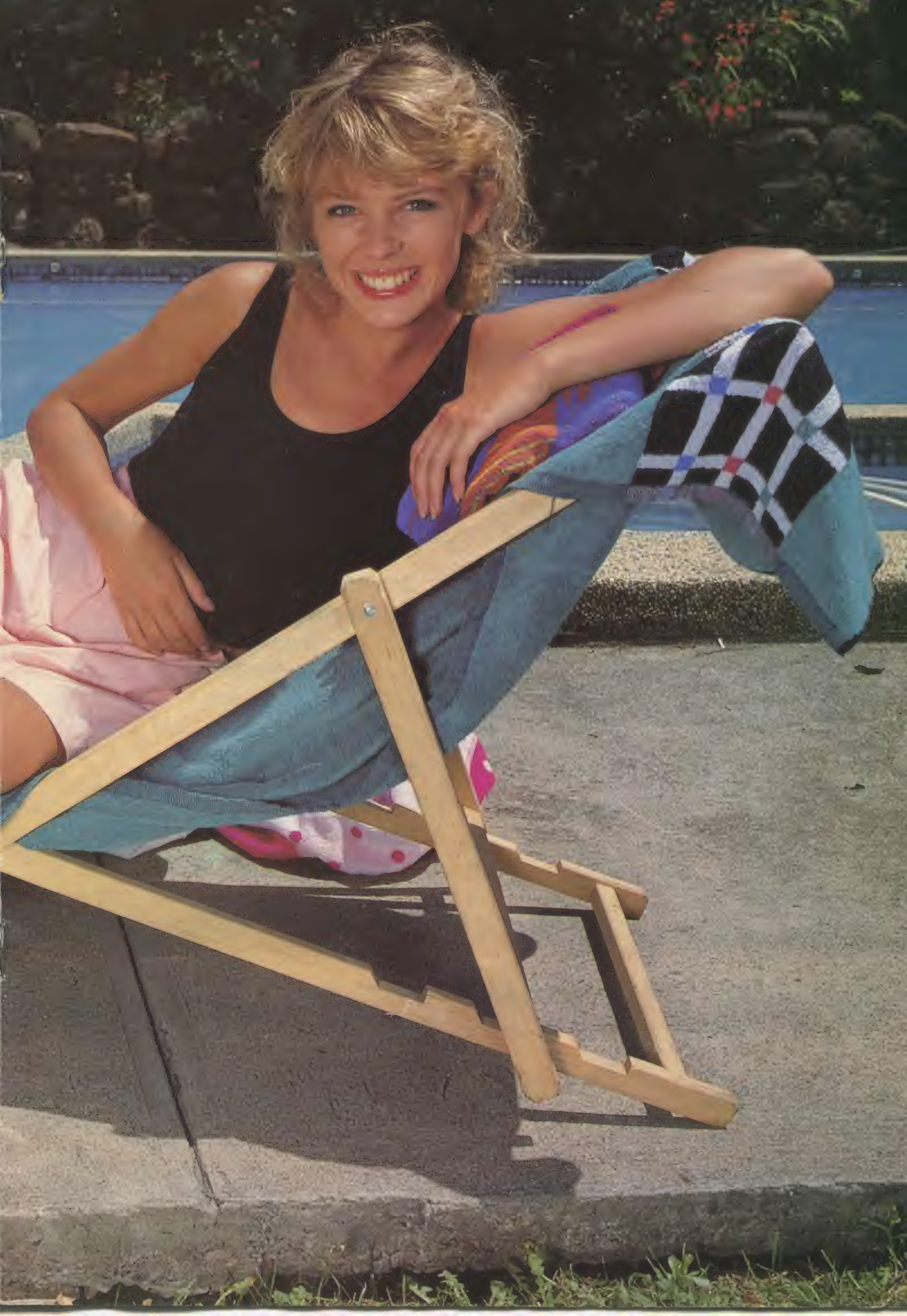
At the moment she is busy recording her album. Kylie is now planning another trip to Britain in the summer to promote the album. Kylie has no plans to leave Australia permanently. "Melbourne is so much more spacious than London. It's too cold and wet in England. I can't understand why NEIGHBOURS is so popular with British audiences, because it deals with Australian issues."

Lovelife

The romance of Charlene and Scott is one of the series most popular storylines. They married in NEIGHBOURS on Australian TV in July '87. Marriage problems for the Robinson's include them being hard up and discussing where and when to have a baby. For Charlene wants to wait and train to be a car mechanic.

Like a publicist's dream come true, Kylie has fallen in love with her TV boyfriend Jason Donovan who plays Scott Robinson. Kylie recently spent two passion filled weeks with lover Jason on the paradise island of Tahiti. The young lovers shared a beachside flat and Kylie went swimming and sunbathed topless. Kylie is fairly reticent when it comes to talking about her intimate private life. But she did confide, "Nowadays it's not up to the man to invite the woman to bed, it's up to the girl. I would like to get married and have kids but that's a long way off, I don't want to be tied down with a ring on my finger at my age and I wouldn't commit myself to someone unless I could do it fully.."

Her longest intimate relationship, before Jason, lasted more than a year and ended on good terms. "It was nothing traumatic. He lives in Melbourne and I still see him occasionally."



JASON

JASON DONOVAN
Scott Robinson

Jason Donovan is the second Scott, after Channel 7 cancelled NEIGHBOURS some of the cast left including the first actor to play Scott — Darius Perkins who quarrelled with Grundy, only to be replaced by Jason.

"Some people can't stop knocking NEIGHBOURS, they say I'm only here because my dad's a big TV actor."

Blue eyed blonde Jason, 19, is the son of Australian TV star Terry Donovan, who is married to Marlene — a former model. His real mother is TV personality Sue McIntosh, although over the years he hasn't seen much of her.

"When my mum left, there was a period of seven years when dad and I lived by ourselves. During that time I spent hours with dad on TV and film locations. Dad and I were by ourselves from the time I was 12. A lot of the time it was pretty rough on dad and we became very close. Mum doesn't even send me a birthday card now, when my dad re-married she cut contact with me completely", said Jason.

"It's really nice that people like the character, but it sometimes gets tricky, when people come up to you and believe you really are Scott Robinson and want to talk to you as a character."

Jason has used most of his earnings to buy a rundown house in the area of Burnley, in Melbourne, where the series is filmed. The house is packed with electric art. Outside is parked his Volkswagon Golf with a brilliant lime-green coloured surfboard strapped on top.

"No prob," is Jason's favourite expression and nowadays he hasn't any problems, other than keeping quiet his real life relationship with Kylie Minogue. Said Jason with a shy smile, "I'm not looking to settle down or anything like that".

ANNE CHARLSTON
Madge Mitchell

As Madge Mitchell her character is displayed in a vulgar, loud and bossy way, not at all like actress Ann.

Like Madge, Ann is a single parent who brought up her two children 18 year old Nicholas and 14 year old Emma, after a broken marriage.

"Madge is far from being an independent woman. She's still waiting for a man to sweep her off her feet. But she'll always go to work. Australian women do that. It's not to fulfill themselves, just practical."

She's a veteran trooper with 27 years in the acting profession. "I'm just an ordinary actress who's got lucky. Acting is a precarious profession and having been out of work for long periods, I never let myself forget how fortunate I am to have a secure job".

STEFAN DENNIS
Paul Robinson

Ramsay Street's resident ruthless character (every soap has at least one heavy) is Paul Robinson. The mean chief of the Lassiter Hotel who is frequently nasty to Madge, who works in his bar, his father, and younger brother Scott. However, Stefan Dennis, who plays the part of Paul Robinson, says: "He's not totally like JR in 'Dallas'. Paul does have a conscience, sometimes. But he's a bit schizo and can be impractical. But he's a smart cookie."

Paul Robinson is five years younger than 29 year old actor Stefan, who commented: "I wish I'd been doing the things Paul Robinson does at 24, but what does he spend all his huge amounts of money on? All right, I've been lucky these last four years. But it's taken ten years to get there".

Getting there included keeping faith with 'Neighbours' after it was originally cancelled, having only run for six months. When it was revived by another TV station, Stefan quit his role in another Australian soap, 'The Flying Doctors' (which now stars Peter O'Brien), returning to Ramsay Street.

Now Stefan, son of an English sea captain, lives with his wife Roz in a stylish house with a large garden including trees specially imported from England.

ALAN DALE

ALAN DALE
Jim Robinson

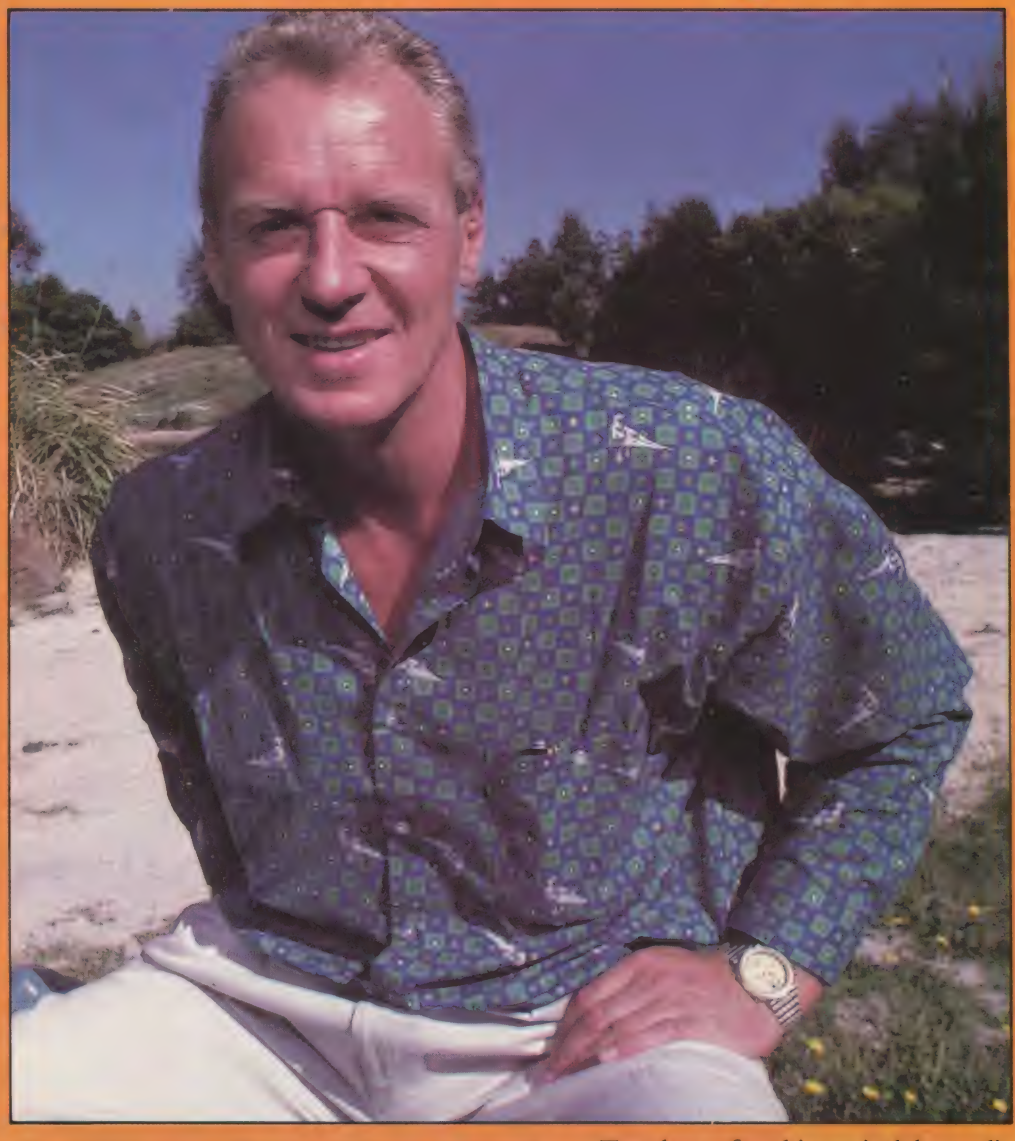
He is a key figure since the very first episode. Responsible for getting a young girl pregnant in the series (handled somewhat more discreetly than Dirty Den and Michelle in EastEnders).

Jim had an affair with Zoe Davis (played by Ally Fowler). She became pregnant but lost the baby through a miscarriage.

In real life 40 year old Alan Dale is married to a blonde former Miss Australia of 1986, Tracy Pearson aged 22, (13 years younger). His home is a bungalow in Brighton, a select suburb of Melbourne. He has two sons, Matthew 17, and Simon 18, by his first wife Claire aged 36. He married Claire when he was 21. To help pay his way through college in New Zealand he had to take a job as a milkman.

Recalled Claire "In the end I guess we were just never really suited. We had a bitter patch when the marriage broke up, but that's history. Alan always wanted to make it big. He's very ambitious, very determined. I knew he could act, however I was surprised when he made it so big on Australian TV".

Alan worked as a late night DJ on the No. 1 Auckland radio station. He didn't become a professional actor until he was 30 years old. Then he moved to Australia with his sons in '79.



Ten days after his arrival he auditioned for Grundy and went on to play Dr. Forrest in the 'Young Doctors', for some three and a half years. When a new TV soap opera began called 'Radio Waves', Alan was asked to play the leading role — as a station manager.

Towards the end of 1984, he had a small role in another series in Sydney. Then contractual difficulties led to the actor originally hired to play Jim Robinson in NEIGHBOURS suddenly dropping out of the show. Scenes already filmed using the first actor had to be scrapped and Alan quickly stepped in to re-shoot them. Alan is the highest paid cast member earning some one thousand pounds. However, he sometimes whinges that they are exploited.

Alan is a sports enthusiast — who has won trophies for rugby. He now pursues wind-surfing, taking his sailboard down to Port Phillips Bay during the summer months.

ANNIE JONES

ANNIE JONES
Jane Harris

Annie, the youngest of three sisters, was born and raised in Adelaide. Her cousin, a photographic student, talked her into entering a magazine covergirl contest when she was just 14. She won!

A few years later she auditioned with hundreds of other girls, but beat them all for the starring role in the feature film 'Run Chrissie Run'.

Between TV and film work she took jobs as a salesgirl and a waitress. Then she landed a part in the TV soap 'Sons And Daughters'. This led her into her new role in NEIGHBOURS.

Each day before filming could start on the programme, make-up girls had to work like fury to hide Annie's natural good looks!

"It was much more of a challenge to play Jane like that," said Annie. "I rather enjoyed being the ugly duckling in that respect. People do get the impression you're just a pretty face if you don't get these roles which give you the opportunity to show what you can do. There was a girl at the school I went to, everyone picked on her. I feel sorry for her now. I know what it feels like."

In NEIGHBOURS storyline, Annie as plain Jane Harris is transformed from a bespectacled, matted haired schoolgirl into a glamorous model. This happens after Daphne takes her to find a dress, high heels and a new hairstyle for the school dance. Her new image stuns the boys and leads her into pursuing a modelling career.

THE AUSTRALIAN SOAP SAGA

'Neighbours' is now the most post popular soap on Australian TV, close on a third of the nation's 16 million population watch it every weekday evening.

Originally, 'Neighbours' was only screened in Britain to fill a gap in the daytime schedules. Then one child, 16 year old Alison Grade, mentioned to her father that she and her friends watched it avidly each day on a TV in the school computer room. Her father happened to be Michael Grade, then controller of BBC programming. This information inspired him to give the series a repeat showing at 5.35pm all week. Within a short space of time the combined audience each day went up to some 15 million plus. Making 'Neighbours' the third most popular regular programme on TV after 'EastEnders' and 'Coronation Street'. Head of BBC Purchasing, Barry Brown, commented: "It's such a change from the normal soaps. It's not glossy like 'Dallas' or 'Dynasty' and it's not working class like 'Coronation Street' or 'EastEnders'. (The latter is notably overburdened with an often downbent mood, in contrast to Britain's increasing prosperity.)

Even younger members of British royalty now watch. At a bicentennial concert in Sydney, Princess Diana told Kylie Minogue that she was a big fan and was looking forward to catching up with the series when she returned home.

Peter O'Brien, who played Shane (pronounced Sh-iy-ne), commented: "I suppose its success is simply that it's about ordinary, everyday people and ordinary everyday events. In 'Neighbours' a story line is more likely to revolve around someone mowing the lawn than somebody being raped. It's just so completely believable."

'EastEnders', 'Brookside' and 'Coronation Street' are all enormously popular in Australia. There are major differences between Australian and British made soap series. Most British series, or at least the makers, retain a class consciousness which seems rooted in the past. In Australia programmes this is absent, as it is in Australian society, and is more or less here. Another element definitely not found in 'Neighbours' or any other Australian soap is the desire evidenced by the makers of 'EastEnders' and 'Brookside' to promote certain social messages approved by the writers. Who seem to have forgotten the old movie adage, 'If you've got a message, send it by Western Union'. Australian soaps are pleasantly unencumbered by this — like classic pop songs, they're not 'committed' to making deep statements, but simply set out to entertain.

Of course the duopoly of the BBC and commercial television, with their own homegrown soaps, are somewhat reluctant to promote these cheaply purchased programmes, used as fillers outside of peak viewing times. Even with 'Neighbours' a major hit on the BBC, it is not exactly given coverage in Radio Times features.

It's interesting to note that none of the numerous daytime US soaps (where the concept originated on US radio in the 30s) has ever been screened in the UK. The expensively filmed series like 'Dallas' and 'Dynasty' with their wish-fulfilment dreams of wealth and power, are far removed from normal life, the substance of everyday soaps from 'Brookside' and 'Neighbours'.

Since the start of afternoon TV entertainment programming in the mid 1980s, we've taken to a whole series of Australian made soaps. Mainly screened on ITV, they have included:

'A Country Practice' (started production in 1981) of the Wandin Valley folk including a dedicated methodical policeman, a progressive doctor and an independent beautiful woman vet, in stories which blend romantic developments and medical problems.

'The Young Doctors' (made from 1976 to 1981) followed the tribulations and romances of Albert Memorial Hospital's junior doctors and young nurses. Incidentally, 'Neighbours' Alan Dale played Dr Ramsay for some three years in this.

The series is often remembered for using the absolute minimum of sets. But this has proved a strength for many Australian soaps, including 'Neighbours', as without intention it forces the writers and us to concentrate on the same characters without interruptions of change, creating a greater intensity and sense of involvement.

'The Sullivans' (made from 1976 to 1982) — this superior series was slow paced, often sentimental, similar to the British made 'Family at War'. Depicting the changes in the life of the Sullivans and their four grown children in an ordinary small town affected and involved by changes wrought by World War II and the late 40's.

'Sons & Daughters' (made from 1981 to 1987) — like 'Prisoner: Cell Block H', it was so appalling it had a compulsive viewing effect, as the poorer Palmers of Melbourne and the rich Hamiltons of Sydney constantly plotted and schemed against each other. A hit not only here but in Belgium too.

'Prisoner Cell Block H' (made from 1978 to 1986) — late night viewing in the UK for this mildly salacious series, with an undercurrent of genuine nastiness set in a women's prison. Not exactly in the class of Britain's 'Between These Walls', this series strove for sensationalism, though fairly restrained. With a butch sadistic warder, a handsome prison doctor whose attractive girlfriend is serving time for murder, and a lesbian inside for armed robbery.

'The Flying Doctors' (started in 1986) — No connection with an old black and white series of the same title, it's heading this way. Both ITV and BBC are bidding for it. This more expensively filmed series proved a hit in Australia, after a 1985 mini series test flight. It's centred around Coopers Crossing, a remote community in Victoria, and air medic Geoff and his relationship with country girl nurse, Kate.

Last year Peter O'Brien, who has left 'Neighbours' in Australia, joined the cast for the second series as pilot Sam Patterson, in love with a beautiful female aeroplane mechanic. Said Peter: "I play an honest country boy pilot. He's a one woman man — totally different from Shane."

There are close on a dozen major Australian made soaps which have never been screened in the UK, including 'Possession', 'Cop Shop', 'The Henderson Kids', 'Class of 75', 'Matlock', and 'Carson's Law', which included Elaine Smith among the cast. Two more Australian soaps 'Richmond Hill' and 'Home & Away' are set for screening on ITV later this year.

ELAINE

ELAINE SMITH
Daphne Clarke

Although she has an Australian accent Elaine was actually born in Largs, in Ayrshire. Her father is a carpenter who liked to travel and thought the experience would be a good education for Elaine and her brothers. Thus the family emigrated to Australia before Elaine was two, returned to live in Norwich for a while, moved on to South Africa and settled finally in Perth, Western Australia, when she was 13.

Elaine was always interested in the theatre and was part of a troupe which gave performances in country schools. She graduated from Perth University, where she majored in literature and theatre, then did some stage work in Perth.

"Acting roles were difficult to find in Perth because it is quite a small city. I moved to the eastern states where I had some minor TV parts before having my big break with NEIGHBOURS." Elaine recalled, "I arrived in Mel-

bourne with long, straight hair and I guess, looked fairly conservative. A friend told me to have it cut short because it would suit me. When I heard they were auditioning for a brand-new series called NEIGHBOURS, I went along for a screen test for a guest role as Lorraine. The producers had old photographs of me and were quite surprised to see how different I looked with my new short and spiky hairstyle. Shortly afterwards, they asked me back to do a screen test for Daphne. The producers wanted an actress with a different look, one that wasn't too commonplace. I'm convinced my hairdo played an important part in getting me the role."

Elaine played reformed stripper Daphne Clarke, who jilted Shane for Des. Daphne is probably the only stripper never to have been seen removing her clothes. "She was a bit of a challenge at first. But in the end, I felt trapped in her personality".

"I have gained quite a high profile, just like your Coronation Street and EastEnders actors have in Britain. I'm recognised in the street, but I'm pleased to say I've never found it's been a problem. Teenagers tend to flock around me when I'm out, but that's fine, because Daphne is a girl-next-door type that they feel at ease with. A lot of parents in Australia like the show because it deals with teenage problems, and teenagers will listen to what NEIGHBOURS has to say more than they will to Mum and Dad. We were all very surprised at the favourable reaction towards the series in Britain because it's very much an Australian show and we never imagined it would be sold overseas."

In real life Elaine doesn't live with lover Peter O'Brien but retains her independence by sharing a flat in trendy Toorah with another actress. Elaine also revealed that she has in fact left NEIGHBOURS, making her final appearance at the beginning of this year. So her TV marriage to Des Clarke (Paul Keane), ends in tragedy. They have a premature baby boy, who survives. But Daphne becomes depressed. Then she learns her father is ill and she goes away to nurse him. Tragedy strikes, when returning home she is killed in a car crash." I am pleased it's finished with Daphne dying, and it frees Des. It will be a strong story bringing up the Baby."

Neighbours

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GUY PEARCE

Mike Young

He's an ex body builder champ with brown eyes and smouldering dark looks that promise something. The type of man most women would like to be between the sheets with. At 20 years, he's now on top of the world.

I took up bodybuilding because, as I'm a bit of a loner, I don't like team sports — not because of vanity. I'm 5'10" tall, but I weigh 12 stone thanks to bodybuilding. When I can, I pump iron for three hours", said Guy. It was this hunky physique which helped land him the part in 'Neighbours'. The producers of the series saw photographs of him as winner of 'The Victoria Teenage Body Builder' title in 1985. Once he was cast they soon ensured there would be lots of scenes with Guy wearing only his swimming trunks.

Says Guy: "I'm a sports fanatic, so I especially enjoy the stunts in the show. In one scene I had to swim through the waves and surf to save Daphne. We had to shoot this scene several times to get it right but being a keen swimmer I found it totally exhilarating".

In 'neighbours' he's Mike Young, the trainee diver who on British screens is pursuing Jane Harris (played by Annie Jones). Says Guy: "Because in the series Mike's dad often beats up on him, I've been getting a lot of sad letters from kids telling me they also get beaten up at home".

Guy was British born in Ely, Cambridgeshire, and recently visited relatives over here. When Guy was four his New Zealand father, Stewart, who was in the RAF, was commissioned by the Australian government to work as a test pilot. The family moved to Australia. Four years later tragedy struck when Guy's father test flew a Nomad and it crashed, killing him. Recalled Guy: "I remember thinking how unfair life can be. But at least I was old enough to remember him with great affection."

Guy has one personal sadness in his life. For his older sister, Tracy, 22, is mentally handicapped with a mental age of a ten year old. Said Guy: "She's really great. When we all meet up, the first thing she'll ask me is how's Des, how's Daphne and how's all the other characters. Some kids are cruel to her and tease her. But Tracy and I just sit down together and talk about it."

Fame can have greater hazards than constant invasion of your private life. Recounts Guy: "I was in this shopping precinct once, signing my autograph for some girls, when a guy came towards me with a knife, saying I was out to steal his girl. I succeeded in persuading him otherwise, then turned my back and walked away, praying that he wouldn't stab me in the back. Fortunately nothing happened but I was shaking for quite a while afterwards."

Today Guy owns a house in Melbourne, where he is currently building a garage. His intimate girlfriend for the last year is 20 year old Shaney. "We first met up at a Neighbours promotional event. But I was the one who had to do all the chasing. I think that's what appealed to me. It's now a pretty serious relationship but, at 20, I really don't think I'm old enough to get married."

PAUL KEANE

Paul Keane as Des Clarke.

***ABOVE* Des & Daphne's new T.V. baby.**

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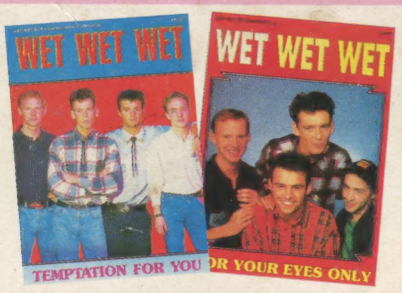

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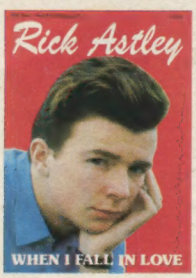

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